

Public Open House Meeting Summary

Project Name: I-86B E. American Falls IC O'Pass

**Project Manager: Todd Tuckett, Idaho Transportation Department
District 5**

Project Sponsor: Idaho Transportation Department

Project Nimber: IBR-1721(102)

Key Number: 8671

*August 16, 2005
American Falls, Idaho*

Project Facts

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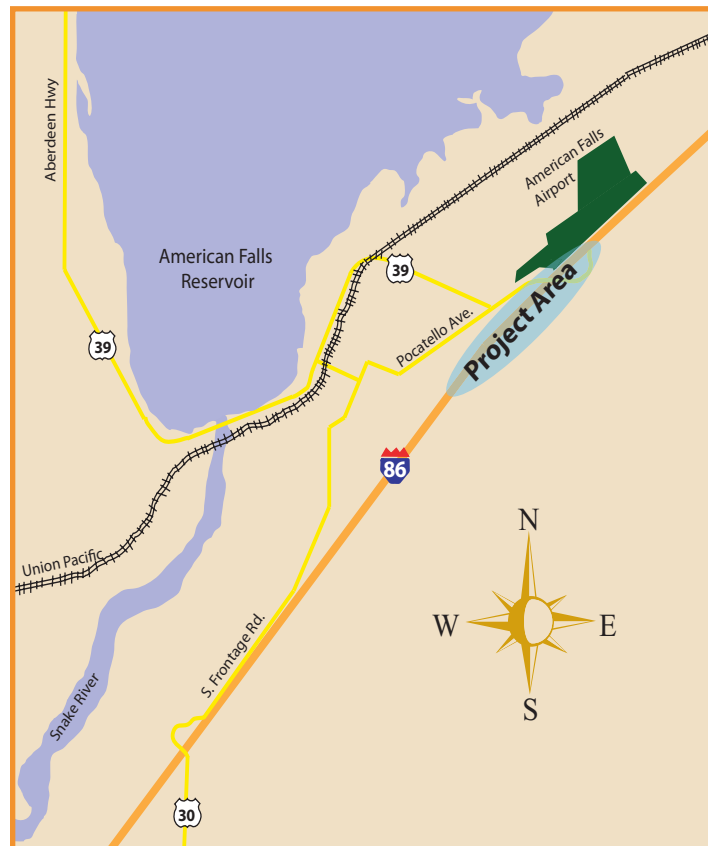
Idaho Transportation Department (ITD) is preparing environmental documentation, preliminary engineering and design to replace the East American Falls Interchange at exit 40 over I-86.

The I-86 East American Falls Interchange Project is evaluating interchange options on I-86 within an area approximately 1500 feet west and 250 feet east of the current interchange location.

Project Background

The project will build on alternatives studied in the East American Falls Interchange Feasibility Study (2003) or new alternatives proving feasible. The project follows the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process to develop a preferred alternative that meets all safety, environmental and design criteria of the project. The design of the project is anticipated to take approximately 2 ½ years to complete. Once the design is finalized the project becomes eligible for construction depending on the availability of funding.

The Exit 40 Interchange is one of the oldest in the State of Idaho and is one of two access points to I-86 for the American Falls community. Current design standards are higher than those in effect when the original interchange was built. Issues that must be addressed include replacing the bridge deck, the substandard turn radius at the off-ramps, and the deficient clearance height over the interstate mainline. A new structure will provide better traffic flow, improved user conditions, a better turn radius and increased clearance for truck traffic. The reconstructed/realigned rural interchange is expected to be one-lane each direction with a center turn lane going over/under the existing four-lane interstate.



I-86 E. American Falls Interchange

Project # IBR-1721(102)

Key # 8671

First Public Open House Summary

Meeting Date, Time and Location

August 16, 2005 (4-7:00 p.m.) – William Thomas Middle School, American Falls, ID

Staff Attendance

Todd Tuckett (ITD D5)
Judy Harmon (ITD D5)
Chuck Heiser (ITD D5)
Jeff Simmons (Jacobs)
Jeff Sims (Jacobs)
Mary Ann Mix (MPE)

Ryan Walz (ITD D5)
Dan Harelson (ITD D5)
Gwen Smith (ITD PA)
Trent Hanson (Jacobs)
Brandon Coates (LFPR)
Larry Young (MPE)

Idaho Transportation Department District 5 (ITD D5)
Idaho Transportation Department Public Affairs (ITD PA)
Jacobs Civil (Jacobs)
Lynda Friesz Public Relations (LFPR)
MPE, Inc. (MPE)

Meeting Attendance

A total of 52 people attended the open house meeting.

Meeting Overview

A Public Open House Meeting was held August 16, 2005 at William Thomas Middle School, 355 Bannock Avenue in American Falls, Idaho. The purpose of the meeting was to serve as part of the NEPA scoping process, gather public input and identify issues concerning possible interstate access/interchange options for replacing Exit 40 in American Falls.

Project displays were set up to provide project information to the public and to gather their input. Displays included: welcome, project purpose/overview, environmental process, and a typical section.

Open House Meeting Public Involvement Schedule

July 27, 2005	Newspaper ad appeared in the Power County Press (American Falls) announcing the open house meeting time and location
July 28, 2005	Brochure mailed to stakeholders announcing open house meeting time and location, and providing information about the project

July 31, 2005	Newspaper ad appeared in the Idaho State Journal (Pocatello) announcing the open house meeting time and location
August 3, 2005	Newspaper ad appeared in the Power County Press announcing the open house meeting time and location.
August 4, 2005	Meeting reminder postcard mailed to stakeholders announcing the open house meeting time and location.
August 5, 2005	Press release sent to local media announcing the open house meeting time and location, and providing information about the project.
August 7, 2005	Newspaper ad appeared in the Idaho State Journal announcing the open house meeting time and location
August 10, 2005	Newspaper ad appeared in the Power County Press announcing the open house meeting time and location
August 14, 2005	Newspaper ad appeared in the Idaho State Journal announcing the open house meeting time and location
August 16, 2005	Open House Public Meeting held at William Thomas Middle School in American Falls, Idaho
August 30, 2005	Public comment period ended

Project Mailings, Meeting Announcements and the Stakeholder List

Project mailings were distributed to stakeholders near the project area through a zip-code mail drop to all of Power County (zip-code 83211). The zip-code mailing list was combined with the project stakeholder list which included city, county and state officials, state and federal agencies, interested citizens and local media. The stakeholder list grows throughout the project as additional stakeholders request to be included and property owners are identified. A total of one-hundred and six (106) stakeholders from the stakeholder list were included in the mailings.

Both a postcard and a brochure were distributed to stakeholders prior to the open house meeting. The brochure was mailed out to provide information about the project and invite the public to the open house meeting. The postcard was mailed out later to remind the public about the open house time, date and location. A total of 2,892 addresses were included in the mailings.

July 2005 Brochure Mailing Total	2,892
August 2005 Postcard Mailing Total	2,892

Newspaper Advertisements and Press Releases

Newspaper advertisements announcing the open house meeting time and location were placed in the Idaho State Journal (Pocatello) three (3) consecutive Sundays prior to the meeting and the Power County Press (American Falls) three (3) consecutive Wednesdays prior to the meeting. The Idaho Transportation Department's Public Affairs Office distributed a press release to the

local media outlets in the Pocatello/American Falls area encouraging participation at the meeting and media coverage two weeks prior to the meeting.

Summary of Written Comments

Comments were collected from August 10, 2005 through August 30, 2005. Fourteen (14) written comment forms regarding the project were collected at the open house. All of the comments received through regular mail, via e-mail and telephone conversations are included in this summary. A total of eighteen (18) stakeholders submitted comments. Numerous comments, issues and concerns regarding the project were expressed in each comment form. The comment forms have been transcribed as closely to the respondent's original words as possible. Names and addresses of the respondent have been removed.

Transcribed Comments

Comment 1

I feel the 1500' West is not only the safest way but gives the ground around more of the ability to encourage business. American Falls will be a bedroom community to Pocatello and the access SW side of I-86 has a need for farmers bring in product and the possibility for new homes on that side. The next best alternative would be 1000' West. This does, however, cut down the land use in the now hotel/truck stop and also access is a concern. Please choose either and make a decision so we (Am. Falls) can start planning where/how we, as a community, can plan for growth.

Comment 2

My wife and I feel that either the 1000 ft. West or 1500 ft. West options best serve all of the transportation needs as well as the potential for economic impact and community development needs of the community.

I feel that indecision is currently hurting the area where development is concerned. Whatever the decision may be it is very important to the community to make that decision and make it public as soon as possible.

Comment 3

I feel as a farmer and property owner that either the 1000' West alternative or the 1500' West alternative would best suit the local users of this interchange, as it best meets the needs of the farming community both in design and function (i.e. straight lines to and from our markets – American Falls). Though initially more costly, the long-term benefits outweigh initial costs. Along with the potential of future commercial development greatly needed for new businesses. Right now people with an interest in commercial property are waiting to see which alternative will be chosen. So it is paramount that a decision be made as quickly as possible. Thank you for the opportunity to go to the open house and to visit one-on-one with the ITD engineers and officials.

Comment 4

#3 or 4 look good. #3 looks like less interference with canal. The new interchange needs to address congestion at the bypass, large truck traffic and wide farm equipment.

This interchange is the only Snake River crossing from the Tilden Bridge south of Blackfoot to the Burley area. It handles a large amount of traffic and will handle more in the future. Whoever dreamed when the existing overpass was built that the equipment would ever get this big? Let us plan for the future.

Comment 5

The 1000' West alternate seems to best address the needs that I feel are important. The bypass intersection improvement is as important to the traveling public as the bridge. This option will make moving wide agricultural equipment much easier.

Comment 6

I like the 1000' West Alternative the best. This concept looks to be the least impact on the area. My observation in most new freeway construction is the underpass concept. This leave the freeway unobstructed, and if enough height and width is built in the underpass we will be able to accommodate modern equipment and trucks. I farm west of Am. Falls, across the dam and this is a vital intersection to me. The sugar beet trucks are long and tall. The existing overpass is terrible to use. One suggestion the west on-ramp should be 3 lanes wide to let trucks get up to speed going west. This should stay 3 lanes until they reach the crest of the hill.

Thank you. We need this new interchange very much.

Comment 7

I-86 1000 ft West is my preference.

Comment 8

I prefer the 1000' west because it gives us everything we need including no stop for traffic on the bypass. We do need a turning lane on the bypass going north and south by the marina road.

Comment 9

The way it is now, people turning right off on ramp – they will pull out in front of you as you drive across the bridge, and there is not enough room for trucks to turn. For money, 50' East is best: only. Down the road, there could be problems with intersection 39.

Comment 10

All of the plans have pros & cons. Cost-wise, I would choose the 50' West plan. It is simple and cost conscience.

The 1000' West plan would be my 2nd choice. It is progressive for the future and yet has less impact on surrounding properties.

Comment 11

I am in favor of 250' West Alternative because of the cost, and it would take less new land. To me, the ramps look better and the bridges could be built without problems of existing buildings. The most important should be the cost.

Comment 12

The 250' West seems to me most feasible! Because underpass in winter would NOT WORK! The overpass is best for seeing on-coming traffic! Thank you!

Comment 13

Prefer – 250 West Alternate	1st Choice
Or – 1000 West Alternate	2nd Choice

Comment 14

I prefer the 250' West alternative as 1. It would be less disruptive to interchange businesses and 2. Should maintain the majority of traffic to not have to stop at the by-pass

intersection. (Truck driving is tough business, but the majority should not be forced to acquiesce to their desires.)

Second choice would be the 1000' West if angle and curves could be modified to miss the motel. It does eliminate the steep ramps.

Comment 15

My opinion is to go with the 250 West because right now it is very hard to see cars coming from the south, then it is also hard to see over the hill, to the north of the bridge, the curve going on to the bridge is sharp.

Comment 16

My first comment is that the interchange, inadequate as it may be on paper, is functionally adequate and does not need to be replaced. I have used this interchange regularly over the past 16 years and have witnessed 100% success as far as very large semis negotiating the existing turns without problem (and, of course, any semi accessing American Falls will have to negotiate much tighter curves in order to make their deliveries within town). With respect to the clearance above the highway, so far it has managed to be higher than anything anyone has driven under it, and I am not in favor of trucks getting any larger than they are; in any case, with the frequent high winds in this area it seems a poor idea to contemplate ever-taller semi-trailers (so, exactly why does the clearance need to be increased?). Finally, I think it is fiscally irresponsible to contemplate expensive projects that are not absolutely necessary. I would prefer that my tax dollars go to more-frequent lane-stripping of the highways, for instance.

Probably the DOT will replace this interchange, so let's deal with that issue. The fact that this is only one of two interchanges serving AF does not convey it's importance to the community; from a functional perspective, it is probably 90% of the interchanges serving AF if traffic volume is considered. Furthermore, there are absolutely no alternative access routes to the east except the western interchange that are paved. AF and Pocatello are very closely linked with respect to commuters and business traffic. If, during the construction of the new interchange, access to AF must take place via the west interchange, this will add 10 miles (on top of 25) to the commute between AF and Pocatello. This will seriously impact the following parties:

1. Job commuters between Pocatello, American Falls, and Aberdeen. There are, in fact, a number of people that make the 45 mile commute between Pocatello and Aberdeen to work at the University of Idaho facilities, the U.S.D.A facilities, J.R Simplot, etc. Especially for Aberdeen employers, closing this interchange will negatively impact their ability to hire and retain employees, which in turn may impact the willingness of certain employers (J.R. Simplot) to remain in this small town, or the ability of others to remain in business.
2. People doing business in American Falls and Aberdeen. Some of our area businesses--my apartment rental business, the local lumber supplier, several local machine shops, for instance--that are not large enterprises would lose business from Pocatello consumers that could be significant. Area contractors, small fabrication plants, and farmers may have to take the extra trip to the west interchange multiple times per day, significantly increasing their cost of doing business.
3. People and farmers living on the South side of I-86 across the interchange. These are essentially residents of A.F. who may have essential business to do in town--their access to A.F. would be to drive to the Seagull Bay interchange before they could drive to the west access--which would for them add as much as 18 miles to their trip.
4. Residents--including children at most of the American Falls schools--which will be endangered by the necessity of all heavy truck traffic passing through town, much of

which now uses the bypass to the east interchange.

So all this to say two things: 1. I'd rather keep the interchange as it is. 2. If the interchange is to be replaced, it is VERY IMPORTANT that it not interfere with relatively unrestricted access to town (which means that it will have to be relocated). To the extent that this is impossible, funds should be allocated to enable 7-day-per-week, 24 hour construction so that the project is completed as rapidly as possible. Doing otherwise will be extremely costly to an area that is struggling economically--please consider as a cost of doing this project.

Thank you.

Comment 17

Option 1 – Does not solve any existing problems.

Option 2 – Would be a good improvement, much better for traffic.

Option 3 – Would be a good design, would not need drastic changes on the canal. Maybe traffic would move too fast past car dealership and crossings to Marina and Stake Center. Trucks would be going 65mph through that area.

Option 4 – Way too expensive and huge changes to the canal. We don't want this one at all. Also it would let traffic go way too fast coming into A.F. Option 2 or 3 looks the most feasible. Truck speed is a major problem at all four crossings.

Comment 18

As discussed with representatives from the Idaho Transportation Department on August 16, 2005, the Main Canal East and Lateral E 3.0 are owned by the United States, Bureau of Reclamation, with 1890 rights-of-way reserved to the U.S. for these facilities. Falls Irrigation District has operation and maintenance of these facilities. Reclamation and the Irrigation District will work with the Transportation Department with any crossings or relocations of these facilities and easements that may be necessary. Please work with Yvonne Daniel, Realty Specialist, with this project (208) 678-0461, extension 31. She has sent Jeffrey Simmons, Project Manager, and electronic version of the map she had at the meeting showing the location of the canal and lateral.